

What is claimed is:

1. A mortarboard for retaining and carrying mortar, the mortarboard comprising:  
a substantially flat piece of material defining a holding surface area, the holding surface area being continuously contoured in a dished-out manner to facilitate the retention and carrying of mortar,  
wherein the mortarboard has an outermost thickness dimension  $w$  and a central most portion of the dished-out surface, and the central most portion is recessed less than about 3 inches from the outermost thickness dimension  $w$ .
2. The mortarboard according to claim 1, further including a carrying handle.
3. The mortarboard according to claim 2, wherein the material defines a cut-out area portion configured to form the handle.
4. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the central most portion of the dished-out surface is recessed less than about 1 inch from the outermost thickness dimension  $w$  of the mortarboard.
5. The mortarboard according to claim 4, wherein the central most portion of the holding surface area is recessed less than about 0.5 inches from the outermost thickness dimension  $w$  of the mortarboard.
6. The mortarboard according to claim 5, wherein the central most portion of the holding surface area is recessed less than about 0.375 inches from the outermost thickness dimension  $w$  of the mortarboard.
7. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the material includes two side edges and a bottom edge, and the holding surface area extends to the side and bottom edges of the material.

8. The mortarboard according to claim 7, further including a carrying handle.
9. The mortarboard according to claim 8, wherein the material defines a cut-out area portion configured to form the handle.
10. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the material includes two side edges and a bottom edge, and the holding surface area is separated from the side and bottom edges of the material by raised peripheral lip portions.
11. The mortarboard according to claim 10, wherein the holding surface area that is adjacent to the raised peripheral lip portions is recessed from the peripheral lip portions by less than about 0.5 inches.
12. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the material includes a bottom surface that has supporting ribs formed integrally with the material.
13. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the material includes a bottom surface that is configured to accommodate a support stand.
14. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the mortarboard is formed from a polymer material.
15. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein at least an upper surface of the holding surface area is formed from a polymer material.
16. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the outermost thickness dimension  $w$  is less than about 1 inch.

17. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the mortarboard is substantially rectangular in shape.
18. The mortarboard according to claim 1, wherein the material is configured so that a front and a rear surface of the material will nest together when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.
19. A mortarboard for retaining and carrying mortar, the mortarboard comprising:  
a generally flat piece of material defining a holding surface area configured to retain and carry mortar; and  
a carrying handle.
20. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the holding surface area is substantially flat.
21. The mortarboard according to claim 19, wherein the material includes two side edges and a bottom edge, and the holding surface area is separated from the side and bottom edges of the mortarboard by raised peripheral lip portions.
22. The mortarboard according to claim 20, wherein the holding surface area that is adjacent to the raised peripheral lip portions is recessed from the peripheral lip portions by less than about 0.5 inches.
23. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the material includes a bottom surface that has supporting ribs formed integrally with the material.
24. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the mortarboard is formed from a polymer material.

25. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein at least an upper surface of the holding surface area is formed from a polymer material.
26. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the mortarboard has an outermost thickness dimension  $w$  that is less than about 1 inch.
27. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the mortarboard is substantially rectangular in shape.
28. The mortarboard according to claim 18, wherein the material is configured so that a front and a rear surface of the material will nest together when more than one mortarboards are stacked together.